

Congressman Childers Announces Disaster Relief Designation for All First District Counties

November 17, 2009

Washington, DC – Congressman Travis Childers (MS-01) today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) decision to designate nearly all Mississippi counties – including all 24 counties in the First Congressional District – as disaster areas, providing much-needed relief to farmers suffering from significant crop losses due to heavy rainfall and flooding. The designation follows the Congressman's urging last month for both the USDA and the State of Mississippi to act swiftly in gathering information necessary to provide farmers with this assistance.

“In North Mississippi, both farmers and local economies have suffered significantly from this fall's unprecedented rainfall. I am extremely pleased that the USDA has issued a disaster area designation to hard-hit counties in the First District. These areas have faced crop losses of 30 percent or more, threatening producers' ability to make ends meet and local economies' ability to stay afloat during already tough economic times. Thanks to much-needed assistance in the form of loans and insurance claims processing, these counties will be able to get back on their feet.”

In letters sent last month to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, Congressman Childers stated the urgency and importance of designating counties in Mississippi as agricultural disaster areas in order to make assistance available as quickly as possible.

Before designating counties as disaster areas, the Mississippi State Emergency Board had to gather the appropriate crop loss numbers for struggling counties, a process that was completed at the end of last month. Farmers in designated counties will now have access to emergency farm loans, Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) assistance, and crop insurance claim processing.

All counties in North Mississippi were designated natural disaster areas Nov. 13, 2009, making all qualified farm operators in the designated areas eligible for low interest emergency (EM) loans from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of the declaration to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. FSA will consider each loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has variety of programs, in addition to the EM loan program, to help eligible farmers recover from adversity.

USDA has also made other programs available to assist farmers and ranchers, including the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE), which was approved as part of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008; the Emergency Conservation Program; Federal Crop Insurance; and the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA Service Centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov> .

A pro-gun, pro-life Mississippian, Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) represents the First Congressional District in North Mississippi. He is a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and serves on the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committee. Congressman Childers co-chairs the reestablished bipartisan Congressional Rural Caucus and was appointed to the bipartisan Second Amendment Task Force. For more information, visit www.childers.house.gov

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